



# OCCOA

## OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING

120 Grandview Blvd., Gaylord, Michigan 49735

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We Care*

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PROGRAM COORDINATOR,  
CINDY LEMKE (LEFT),  
EXPLAINING THE PROGRAM  
TO CLIENT,  
RICKI CALABRIS (RIGHT).



**Eileen Godek**  
VOLUNTEER  
COORDINATOR

## Senior Project Fresh

~ A Community "Win/Win" Program!

Two years ago, the Otsego County Commission on Aging, in partnership with MSU Extension, began a pilot program targeted at bringing locally-grown fresh produce and nutritional information to the older adults (60 or older) of Otsego County. Per Sherri King, Health and Wellness Specialist for the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, Senior Project Fresh was funded from federal tax dollars allocated to the Michigan Department of Community Health by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Donations from the Otsego County Commission on Aging (OCCOA) also helped fund the program.

### 106 OLDER ADULTS BENEFITED IN 2006!

I recently visited with Cindy Lemke, who has been the OCCOA program coordinator for Senior Project Fresh since it began. "We started small our first year," she told me. "We only had 26 individuals." She explained, "It was a pilot program that we wanted to keep small, in order to test it out and work out any bugs." She noted, "Thanks to a successful first year and additional donations, we were able to offer the program to 106 individuals in 2006!"

Senior Project Fresh is modeled after Project Fresh, a component of the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program which has been in existence for many years. Like Project Fresh, the program offers coupon booklets to qualifying participants that might be used at any of the farmer's markets or roadside stands in Michigan that display a Project Fresh sign or plaque.

### THE APPLICATION IS EASY TO COMPLETE!

To apply for this year's program, older adults will need to complete an application that includes a short nutrition screening. Because the program is based on age and income, applicants' birth dates and total household income must be included. Last year's participants will soon receive an application from Lemke for this year's program. Applications will also be sent to anyone who is interested in the program and thinks they might qualify. Lemke noted that the application and nutrition screening is very basic and easy to complete. Applicants will be instructed to mail their completed forms back to Lemke; she will then verify who qualifies for the program.

Those who qualify will either attend a group meeting or schedule a private appointment with Lemke and will receive nutritional information supplied by MSU Extension. Participants will also receive their coupon booklets and instructions for using them. The booklets include ten \$2.00 coupons that may be given to any of the vendors at the farmer's market who display a Project Fresh plaque at their stands. They may only be used to buy fresh vegetables or fruit.

Ricki Calabris recently shared her experience with the program. Both she and her husband, Mike, had participated in the program for the past two years. She remarked, "I liked it because it gave us the opportunity to buy fresh fruits and vegetables we might not have otherwise bought." She also shared, "My husband, Mike, is on a low sodium diet and needs to eat as much fresh produce as possible." She summarized, "It was a good program and close to town, too!"

### THE COUPONS ARE EASY TO USE!

I also spoke with Susan Witt, the market manager for the Farmer's Market that is held every Wednesday and Saturday (8 a.m. to 2 p.m.) in downtown Gaylord under the Pavilion. There is also another participating Farmer's Market next to Hops-n-Schnapps on west M-32 on Wednesdays and Saturdays (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). She shared, "One of my responsibilities for this program is to make sure that all the vendors are aware of the Project Fresh program. If they want to participate, I make sure they get a plaque to display at their stands."

She explained that at the end of each market day, the vendors submit their coupons to her for redemption. She then reimburses them from funds that she receives from the Gaylord DDA (Downtown Development Authority) at the start of the season. She then submits the coupons to the DDA who, in turn, submits them to the Michigan Department of Community Health for reimbursement. Witt noted, "The coupons are so easy to use and this program is so good because it's a Win/Win for everyone. It helps the participants include fresh produce they might not otherwise have in their diets and it also helps our local growers stay in business!"

### HOW YOU MAY HELP!

Donations are being accepted for the program from businesses, churches, other agencies, and individuals. King reported that the Michigan Department of Community Health will match 50 cents for every dollar donated through the OCCOA. Lemke noted, "Even small donations help. For every \$40 donated, an additional person will be able to have a coupon booklet. I would love to see the program grow so that more of our county's older adults might benefit!"

To make a donation or receive an application, please contact OCCOA at 989-732-1122.



**CINDY LEMKE, SENIOR  
PROJECT FRESH COORDINATOR**



SENIOR PROJECT FRESH



**989-732-1122 • www.OtsegoCountyCOA.com**

Fax: 989-731-2739 • [occoa@occoaonline.org](mailto:occoa@occoaonline.org) • Weekdays 8:00 am to Noon and 12:30 to 4:00 pm

**120 GRANDVIEW BLVD. ✦ GAYLORD, MICHIGAN 49735**